



SOUTHEAST FISHERIES BULLETIN

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office
9721 Executive Center Drive N., St. Petersburg, FL 33702
<http://sero.nmfs.NOAA.gov>

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

Steve Branstetter, or Steve.Branstetter@noaa.gov
727/570-5305, FAX 727/570-5583
<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

January 14, 2005
NR05-003

Area of Grammanik Bank Closed off St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands Small Entity Compliance Guide

**NOTE: THIS BULLETIN CORRECTS A FORMATTING ERROR IN THE COORDINATES LISTED IN
BULLETIN NR04-054**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) has published an interim rule to implement measures recommended by the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (Council). From February 1, 2005, through April 30, 2005, no person may fish for or possess any species of fish, except highly migratory species, within the Grammanik Bank closed area. For the purpose of this interim rule, "fish" means finfish, mollusks, crustaceans, and all other forms of marine animal and plant life other than marine mammals and birds. Highly migratory species means bluefin, bigeye, yellowfin, albacore, and skipjack tunas; swordfish; sharks; white marlin, blue marlin, sailfish, and longbill spearfish.

The Grammanik Bank closed area is bounded by rhumb lines connecting, the following points:

Point	North latitude	West longitude
A	18 12.40'	64 59.00'
B	18 10.00'	64 59.00'
C	18 10.00'	64 56.10'
D	18 12.40'	64 56.10'
A	18 12.40'	64 59.00'

The 23.57 square kilometer (6.88 square nautical miles) closure encompasses the area where a yellowfin grouper spawning aggregation is reported to occur on Grammanik Bank.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The reef fish fishery of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands is managed under the Council's Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Fishery of Puerto Rico and of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Researchers at the University of the Virgin Islands documented an annual spawning aggregation of yellowfin grouper at Grammanik Bank, south of St. Thomas. The aggregation occurs from about February through April each year. The researchers also documented a severe decline in abundance during recent aggregations, attributed to increased fishing effort on this stock. The stock is undergoing overfishing according to the best available scientific information. The intended effect of this interim rule is to protect a yellowfin grouper spawning aggregation and to reduce overfishing.

Before implementing this interim rule, NOAA Fisheries prepared a final regulatory flexibility analysis (FRFA). In summary, the FRFA concluded that because of the small size of the closed area, the action is not expected to affect the profits of a substantial number of small entities.

NOAA Fisheries is dedicated to protecting and preserving the nation's living marine resources and their habitats through scientific research, management, and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to customers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

National Marine Fisheries Service
Southeast Regional Office, F/SER23
9721 Executive Center Drive North
St. Petersburg, FL 33702
Official Business
Penalty for Private Use - \$300
NR05-003

FIRST CLASS MAIL
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
PERMIT NO. G-19